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The Hollow Crown Starring a Distinguished Cast Including
Ben Whishaw, Jeremy Irons, Tom Hiddleston, Rory Kinnear,
Simon Russell Beale, Michelle Dockery, Patrick Stewart,
& Many More Airs on Great Performances
September 20 – October 11 on PBS

Large-scale movie versions of “Richard II,” “Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2,” and “Henry V”
comprise the epic mini-series from Sam Mendes and Pippa Harris

The Hollow Crown is a lavish new series of filmed adaptations of four of Shakespeare’s most
gripping history plays; Richard II, Henry IV, Parts I and II and Henry V on THIRTEEN’s
Great Performances beginning Friday, September 20 at 9 p.m. (Check local listings.)

The films – chronicling a bloody tale of family, politics and power -- tell the rise and fall
of three Kings and how their destiny shaped English history. Richard II (Ben Whishaw) is a vain,
self-indulgent man who rules with little regard for his people’s welfare. He is ultimately
overthrown by his cousin Bolingbroke (Rory Kinnear), who ascends the throne as Henry IV (Jeremy Irons). Henry IV’s reign is marred by his own guilt over Richard’s death, civil war, and the gnawing fear that his son Hal (Tom Hiddleston) is a total wastrel unworthy of the throne. When Hal comes to the throne as Henry V he is left to bury the ghosts of his father’s past while fighting both the French forces as well as his own inner demons.

Neal Street Productions, NBCUniversal International, and THIRTEEN have brought new life to William Shakespeare’s history plays in these epic adaptations. And this marks the first time these four plays have been seen on PBS since the epic BBC Shakespeare Plays series presented domestically by THIRTEEN in the early 1980s.

Directed by Rupert Goold (Richard II), Richard Eyre (Henry IV, Parts I and II) and Thea Sharrock (Henry V), The Hollow Crown features some of the most pre-eminent Shakespearean actors of our time. The Kings are played by Ben Whishaw, Jeremy Irons and Tom Hiddleston respectively, supported by a phenomenal cast including Rory Kinnear, Patrick Stewart, David Suchet, David Morrissey in Richard II, Simon Russell Beale, Michelle Dockery, Julie Walters and Maxine Peake in Henry IV and John Hurt, Anton Lesser and Paterson Joseph in Henry V. The plays were filmed on location in England between Summer 2011 and Spring 2012 and are all set in their authentic medieval period. The series premiered to rapturous reviews in the U.K., and was honored with BAFTA Television Awards for Whishaw (Leading Actor) and Simon Russell Beale (Supporting Actor), BAFTA Craft Awards for Original Television Music (Stephen Warbeck) and Sound (Fiction) (Richard II), and an RTS Programme Award for Single Drama (Richard II).

Pippa Harris, who serves as Executive Producer with Co-executive Producer Sam Mendes at Neal Street Productions (makers of Call the Midwife), explains, “The Hollow Crown shows the trials and tribulations and the murderous backdrop behind our own history. Whilst these four plays collectively say so much about Britain, the global appeal of Shakespeare is never-ending. Our phenomenal cast and crew have brought a vivid and inspirational edge to Shakespeare for a worldwide audience.”

Downton Abbey Producer Gareth Neame, Executive Producer for NBCUniversal International and Managing Director of Carnival Films (a division of NBCU International) says, “This is an exciting new cycle of Shakespeare history plays, with stunning performances by a range of wonderful actors. NBCUniversal International is delighted to have been a part of bringing these ambitious productions to the screen.”

David Horn, executive producer of Great Performances, affirms, “The Hollow Crown continues our series’ commitment to bringing exceptional Shakespeare performances to the series, following, as it does, our recent productions of King Lear, Hamlet, and Macbeth, and of course, THIRTEEN’s Shakespeare Uncovered series earlier this year which featured tantalizing clips from these very productions which we’re now so pleased to be showing in full.”
Synopses:

**Richard II (September 20, 9 p.m.)**
KING RICHARD (Ben Whishaw) is called upon to settle a dispute between his cousin HENRY BOLINGBROKE (Rory Kinnear) and THOMAS MOWBRAY (James Purefoy). RICHARD calls for a duel but then halts it just before swords clash. Both men are banished from the realm. RICHARD visits JOHN OF GAUNT (Patrick Stewart), BOLINGBROKE’s Father, who, in the throes of death, reprimands the King. After seizing GAUNT’s money and lands, RICHARD leaves for wars against the rebels in Ireland. BOLINGBROKE returns to claim back his inheritance. Supported by his allies, NORTHUMBERLAND (David Morrissey) and the DUKE OF YORK (David Suchet), BOLINGBROKE takes RICHARD prisoner and lays claim to the throne.

**Henry IV, Part I (September 27, 9 p.m.)**
The heir to the throne, PRINCE HAL (Tom Hiddleston), defies his father, KING HENRY (Jeremy Irons), by spending his time at MISTRESS QUICKLY’s (Julie Walters) tavern in the company of the dissolute FALSTAFF (Simon Russell Beale) and his companions. The King is threatened by a rebellion led by HAL’s rival, HOTSPUR (Joe Armstrong), HOTSPUR’s father NORTHUMBERLAND (Alun Armstrong) and his uncle WORCESTER (David Hayman). In the face of this danger to the state, PRINCE HAL joins his father to defeat the rebels at the BATTLE OF SHREWSBURY and kill HOTSPUR in hand-to-hand combat. Michelle Dockery plays HOTSPUR’s wife, KATE PERCY.

**Henry IV, Part II (October 4, 9 p.m.)**
In the aftermath of the Battle of Shrewsbury, NORTHUMBERLAND learns of the death of his son. THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE (Geoffrey Palmer) attempts, on behalf of the increasingly frail King, to separate FALSTAFF from PRINCE HAL. The rebels continue to plot insurrection. FALSTAFF is sent to recruit soldiers and takes his leave of his mistress, DOLL TEARSHEET (Maxine Peake). The rebel forces are overcome. This brings comfort to the dying King, who is finally reconciled to his son. FALSTAFF rushes to HAL’s coronation with expectations of high office, only to be rebuffed by the former prince who has now become King HENRY V.

**Henry V (October 11, 9 p.m.)**
HENRY V has settled onto the throne and has the makings of a fine King. The French AMBASSADOR (Jérémie Covillault) brings a challenge from the FRENCH DAUPHIN. Inspired by his courtiers, including EXETER (Anton Lesser) and YORK (Paterson Joseph), HENRY swears that he will, with all force, answer this challenge. The CHORUS (John Hurt) tells of England’s preparations for war and HENRY’s army sails for France. After EXETER’s diplomacy is rebuffed by the FRENCH KING (Lambert Wilson), HENRY lays a heavy siege and captures Harfleur. The French now take HENRY’s claims seriously and challenge the English army to battle at Agincourt. HENRY and his meager forces prove victorious against all odds.

*Great Performances* is a production of THIRTEEN for WNET, one of America’s most prolific and respected public media providers. Throughout its 40 year history on public television, *Great Performances* has provided viewers across the country with an unparalleled showcase of the best in all genres of the performing arts, serving as America’s most prestigious and enduring broadcaster of cultural programming. Over the course of its four decades, the
The series has been the home to the greatest artists in the areas of drama, dance, musical theater, classical and popular music, providing many with their very first television exposure.

The Executive Producers are Pippa Harris and Sam Mendes for Neal Street Productions and Gareth Neame for NBCUniversal International and David Horn for Thirteen/WNET. The Hollow Crown was commissioned by Ben Stephenson and Janice Hadlow for BBC Two and was produced by Rupert Ryle-Hodges. Richard II was adapted for the screen by Rupert Goold and Ben Power; Henry IV, Parts I and II by Richard Eyre; and Henry V by Ben Power.

For Great Performances, Bill O’Donnell is series producer; David Horn is executive producer.

Major funding for Great Performances is provided by the Irene Diamond Fund, The Starr Foundation, Vivian Milstein, Rosalind P. Walter, the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation, Joseph A. Wilson, Jody and John Arnhold, The Agnes Varis Trust, and PBS.

Photos and other material can be accessed at the THIRTEEN Online Pressroom.

Visit Great Performances Online at www.pbs.org/gperf for additional information about this and other programs.

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About WNET
In 2013, WNET is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of THIRTEEN, New York’s flagship public media provider. As the parent company of THIRTEEN and WLIW21 and operator of NJTV, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to over 5 million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as Nature, Great Performances, American Masters, Need to Know, Charlie Rose and a range of documentaries, children’s programs, and local news and cultural offerings available on air and online. Pioneers in educational programming, WNET has created such groundbreaking series as Get the Math, Oh Noah! and Cyberchase and provides tools for educators that bring compelling content to life in the classroom and at home. WNET highlights the tri-state’s unique culture and diverse communities through NYC-ARTS, Reel 13, NJ Today and MetroFocus, the multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region.

About Neal Street Productions
Neal Street Productions was formed in 2003 by Sam Mendes, Pippa Harris and Caro Newling. The company has been successful in film, theatre and television with hit movies including Revolutionary Road, Jarhead and Starter for 10. Their diverse television slate includes the award-winning Stuart A Life Backwards, with Tom Hardy and Benedict Cumberbatch, and the hugely successful Call the Midwife, a ratings smash hit which, after two extremely successful series and a Christmas Special, will return with another Christmas Special and Series 3 next year. Neal Street also produced the critically acclaimed and award-winning The Hollow Crown - a series of Shakespeare films for the BBC/PBS - starring Ben Whishaw, Tom Hiddleston and Jeremy Irons. Nicolas Brown, previously the BBC’s Director of Drama Production, has recently joined Neal Street as a company director, to work across the film and TV portfolio. On the theatre side, they have produced The Bridge Project, Shrek the Musical, South Downs & The Browning Version, Enron, Three Days of Rain and the new West End musical of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, directed by Sam Mendes, which opens on June 25th.